

Segment 10 – Ongoing Cycle

Dr. Beverly Showers and Dr. Deborah Hansen introduce the Ongoing Cycle component of the Iowa Professional Development Model. Then two small groups of teachers briefly illustrate a collaboration involving strategies for use with their students. The segment concludes with additional comments by Dr. Showers.

Dr. Hansen:

Another attribute of staff development that was evident in the case study schools was that of collaboration. It was exciting to go in and interview teachers, and we actually got to talk to full teams—leadership teams that had been meeting and working together—about how they structure their collaboration. It was very rewarding to hear teachers talk about how helpful it was to them to have time to collaborate and the benefits of collaboration.

The thing that they found to be very helpful—or helped them to develop the skills they were trying to acquire—was that of planning together. They said that when they had time to work together as partners or small groups to actually plan a lesson together and design, to try the new strategy they were trying to learn, to apply what they learned in the training sessions by designing a lesson and preparing materials and getting ready to teach that lesson, then that aspect of collaboration was one of the most helpful things. And they actually even said for some of them it saved them time. That collaborative piece of planning together was a time-saver. It was pervasive through the interviews that they felt that was one of the best things about staff development—having the opportunity to study with another teacher or other teachers. And that really pushed their skill development by having that opportunity. They also said—across the schools—that it was important and that they appreciated that their administrator protected that time. In some of the schools, there was actually school board action to create an adjusted schedule. Each school did it differently, in terms of how they captured that time and how they organized their work week, but the teachers were given time to collaborate, and they felt that was an important function of the administrator to protect that time and to help them with that structure.

They also appreciated the fact that everybody was expected to engage in this. It wasn't just, "Oh, we'll send one teacher to a seminar somewhere." They thought it was important that every member of their faculty participate in professional development and in the collaboration. They recognized this was a change from past practice, to make sure that all people were engaged and that there were structures there to keep people practicing and studying and learning together. I think there's just a lot of power in that element of the model [collaboration], to ensure that people do indeed learn and apply what they're learning.

Dr. Showers:

Well, the purpose of collaboration—other than it's a nice thing, and it's certainly respectful of professionals sharing their professional knowledge—the specific purpose of the professional development model is to get an implementation of new learning. So if you actually take the time and effort in a professional development initiative to

Video Transcript Edit
The Iowa Professional Development Model

learn something new—new ways of teaching, new content to teach children—but they never experience it in the classroom, then your professional development isn't going to pay off.

The remainder of this segment features two groups of teachers who are collaborating about student data analysis. We will refer to them as Group A and Group B.

Group A discussion.

Group A - member one:

“And the first things we wanted to talk about were the test results from the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, which we've all just completed. And the second thing we wanted to talk about is [if we are] experiencing any problems with our second chance reading strategies. And the third thing is that we want to celebrate strategies that are doing well. So, Diana, let's start with the test results with the Stanford diagnostic reading test. What did you learn?”

Group A - member two:

“Well, the first thing when I went through my results is that I looked for any discrepancies that were three years or more. So if their comprehension was seventh grade but vocabulary was only fourth grade, that was an ‘ah ha’ to me, because that tells me they need more background vocabulary knowledge to boost their comprehension even higher. The other thing is if they're both low—say they're second grade level on both of them—and I have seventh graders, then that is also a big ‘ah ha.’ That means something is not getting through, and that tells me I have to focus more on the vocabulary aspect. And when I say focus more on the vocabulary aspect, I mean on their independent reading level, because without getting their vocabulary up, we're not going to get their comprehension up. So I might put more of an emphasis on their independent reading, having them do more words out of the books that they're reading and fewer from our Read Alouds.”

Group A - member three:

“Good ideas.”

Group A - member one:

“That is a good idea.”

Group A - member three:

“We might also think of, in the future meetings, some mini lessons to increase vocabulary as well.”

Group A - member one:

“I was interested in noting too, when I went through my results—and I haven't had a chance yet to put it all together—but I had, interestingly enough, eight students that were above grade level in both areas. Then I had seven that were above grade level on either comprehension or vocabulary. And I had twenty-three that were below in both. So I had this huge range from second grade ability to post high school.”

Video Transcript Edit
The Iowa Professional Development Model

Group B discussion:

Group B – member one:

“Out of *America Street*, where several of our Read Alouds have come from, I chose ‘No Guitar Blues.’ It’s about a Hispanic youth who sees this Hispanic group on TV and wants to become a guitar player. He knows something good is being done with his money, so he feels better about it that way. And in the end, they end up giving him this old guitar that was in the garage. So now he’s learning how to play that. And I thought with the civics classes covering morals and values right now this might tie in well with that. And also it could tie in with—it’s kind of a play on words—with the ‘No Guitar Blues.’”

Group B – member two:

“This would definitely—if we were to do a cooperative comprehension on this—be the hardest that we’ve done so far.”

Group B – member one:

“Right, because most of them that I’ve done have been pretty basic, cut and dry. This is just so they can get the idea of how to do it. But I think it’s about time to start challenging them a little more.”

Various Group B brief comments are made at once, in which they agree on Member One’s ideas. They begin collaborating on developing objectives for the ‘No Guitar Blues’ reading selection, which has a theme of cultural identity.

Back to Dr. Showers’ presentation:

We talk about implementation, because when we go to the effort to learn new curriculums, new instructional practices, it’s for a purpose. It’s to help children do things they’re struggling with. And implementation means getting it in place in the classroom in such a way that students are benefiting in the way that we intended. So it would be fairly ludicrous to go to all of the effort of analyzing student data, setting goals, finding appropriate content, going through training settings, and spending lots of time and energy to learn to do new things, and then to never ask, “Is this happening in classrooms? Are students experiencing this? And if they are, is it having the intended effect?”

When we are asking the implementation question, we’re saying, “Okay, we’ve done all this work. Are we getting it in place like we said we were, and are the children responding the way we hoped they would?” Implementation data answer the first question—“Are we getting this in place the way we wanted?” [Regarding] the second question—“Are the children responding the way we want?”—we’re collecting data continuously on student responses. Then we put the two together.

[As an example,] we decided we were going to do, for our reading program, three Read Alouds every week, and two Think Alouds—at least half of that with nonfiction material. That was our plan, our implementation plan. We do that for six weeks, monitoring to make sure we’re all doing that, just as we planned. And we take a measure of student comprehension and say, “This isn’t moving as fast as we wanted.”

Video Transcript Edit
The Iowa Professional Development Model

Why do we collect [data]? Number one, it enables us to adjust our implementation plan. But if one teacher is doing Think Aloud once a week, and the teacher next door is doing it daily, we don't have much basis for making judgments on our program. It helps us keep control of our own implementation plan of our program, so that we are doing what we intended to do. And we haven't put a lot of effort in for nothing.

The literacy team organizes the data, and we analyze it across classrooms, across grades and buildings, and even across the district. Then the data is used to drive program design and staff development. Teachers also use the data on a regular basis to plan their instruction. And one of the things that we did this year, right at the beginning, based on data, was group children into small homogeneous groups. That was something very useful to the teachers to have that be our idea in second grade and be able to see [that] these children are instructional in second grade material, but these children are totally frustrated even in first grade material. That helped us to figure out who were the life learners that needed to be together, that we could put in instructional material to keep those kids moving forward.